

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 303

By West

A RESOLUTION To honor the memory of Benjamin Franklin  
Meeker of Donelson.

WHEREAS, Our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, The members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Benjamin Franklin Meeker, who continued this time-honored tradition through service in the United States Army during World War II and in Korea and Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Born in Charlotte, Tennessee, Mr. Meeker grew up in Nashville and enlisted in the Army while attending East Senior High School in 1944; and

WHEREAS, Serving in the European Theatre at the height of World War II, he was assigned as a ball-turret gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress, possibly the most difficult and hazardous assignment to be found in the Army Air Corps; and

WHEREAS, Suspended upside-down from the belly of a massive plane, Mr. Meeker had the unenviable task of protecting his plane against enemy fighters, while being protected from barrages of enemy bullets and flak by only a thin layer of Plexiglas; and

WHEREAS, Following the triumphal conclusion of the war, Benjamin Franklin Meeker left the Army for a short time, but he soon answered the call of duty again when a new war began in Korea; and

WHEREAS, This noble soldier would go on to serve more than twenty years in the Army, including a two-year stint in a non-combat role in Vietnam beginning in 1966; it was during that tour of duty that he displayed unsurpassed courage in completing an act of heroism which earned him the Bronze Star; and

WHEREAS, When an enemy soldier entered an Army compound in Vietnam, and began firing at American soldiers, Sergeant Meeker took the initiative; armed only with a handgun, he subdued the attacker and ended the threat, saving innumerable lives; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the awards and ribbons due this American hero were delayed by bureaucratic red tape, but, following the diligent efforts of his granddaughter, Tara Mattingly, and the intervention of United States Senator Fred Thompson, the ten long overdue Army medals recently arrived, and a surprise presentation ceremony was planned; and

WHEREAS, Although the ceremony never took place, due to his untimely death, Benjamin Franklin Meeker finally received his well-deserved Bronze Star and was buried with it as an enduring symbol of his undaunted courage; and

WHEREAS, Having planned to attend the presentation ceremony, Senator Thompson expressed his sympathy and said, "Benjamin Franklin Meeker was a true hero who served his country with valor in three wars. We were honored to assist his family in gaining long overdue recognition for his service"; and

WHEREAS, This noteworthy Tennessean was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, He enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, the former Charlotte Inman and was the committed parent of two sons, Wayne and Dwight, and the proud grandfather of four; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin Franklin Meeker leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity, probity, loyalty, diligence, and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, He embodied the qualities that earned the men and women of his era recognition as our Nation's Greatest Generation, and he served as an inspirational role model to the citizens of this State; and

WHEREAS, It is not often that an individual of Mr. Meeker's stature and bravery walks the Earth, and it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Benjamin Franklin Meeker, reflecting fondly upon his supreme valor and heroic service to this State and our Nation, as a soldier in the U. S. Army.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Meeker.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.